

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH "THE LITTLE WOMAN" ANNOUNCES HER ENGAGEMENT TO JIM FENTON AND RECEIVES THE CONGRATULATIONS OF HER FRIENDS.

AFTER the frame of Jim's hotel was up, at Number Nine, and those who had assisted in its erection were out of the woods, he and his architect entered with great industry upon the task of covering it. Under Mr. Benedict's direction, Jim became an expert in the work, and the sound of two busy hammers kept the echoes of the forests awake from dawn until sunset, every day. The masons came at last and put up the chimneys; and more and more, as the days went on, the building assumed the look of a dwelling. The grand object was to get their enterprise forwarded to a point that would enable them to finish everything during the following winter, with such assistance as it might be necessary to import from Sevenoaks. The house needed to be made habitable for workmen while their work was progressing, and to this end Mr. Benedict and Jim pushed their efforts without assistance.

Occasionally, Jim found himself obliged to go to Sevenoaks for supplies, and for articles and tools whose necessity had not been anticipated. On these occasions, he always called Mike Conlin to his aid, and always managed to see "the little woman" of his hopes. She was busy with her preparations, carried on in secret; and he always left her with his head full of new plans and his heart brimming with new satisfactions. It was arranged that they should be married in the following spring, so as to be ready for city boarders; and all his efforts were bent upon completing the house for occupation.

During the autumn, Jim took from the Sevenoaks Post-Office a letter for Paul Benedict, bearing the New York post-mark, and addressed in the handwriting of a lady. The letter was a great puzzle to Jim, and he watched its effect upon his companion with much curiosity. Benedict wept over it, and went away where he could weep alone. When he came back, he was a transformed man. A new light was in his eye, a new elasticity in all his movements.

"I cannot tell you about it, Jim," he said; "at least I cannot tell you now; but a great burden has been lifted from my life. I have never spoken of this to you, or to anybody; but the first cruel wound that the world ever gave me has been healed by a touch."

"It takes a woman to do them things," said Jim. "I knowed when ye gin up the little woman, as was free from what happened about an hour arter, that ye was frin' low an' savin' yer waddin'. Oh, ye can't fool me, not much!"

"What do you think of that, Jim?" said Benedict, smiling, and handing him a check for five hundred dollars that the letter had inclosed.

Jim looked it over and read it through with undisguised astonishment.

"Did she gin it to ye?" he inquired.

"Yes."

"An' be ye a goin' to keep it?"

"Yes, I'm going to keep it."

Jim was evidently doubtful touching the delicacy both of tendering and receiving such a gift.

"If that thing had come to me from the little woman," said he, "I should think she was gittin' oneasy, an' a little dubersome about my comin' to time. It don't seem jest the thing for a woman to shell out money to a man. My nater goes agin it. I feel it all over me, an' I vow, I b'lieve that if the little woman had did

that thing to me, I sh'd rub out my reckonin' an' start new."

"It's all right, though, Jim," responded Benedict, good-naturedly—"right for the woman to give it, and right for me to receive it. Don't trouble yourself at all about it."

Benedict's assurance did little to relieve Jim's bewilderment, who still thought it a very improper thing to receive money from a woman. He did not examine himself far enough to learn that Benedict's independence of his own care and provision was partly the cause of his pain. Five hundred dollars in the woods was a great deal of money. To Jim's apprehension, the man had become a capitalist. Some one beside himself—some one richer and more powerful than himself—had taken the position of benefactor toward his friend. He was glad to see Benedict happy, but sorry that he could not have been the agent in making him so.

"Well, I can't keep ye forever'n' ever, but I was a hopin' ye'd hang by till I git hold of the little woman," said Jim.

"Do you suppose I would leave you now, Jim?"

"Well, I knowed a yoke o' cattle couldn't start ye, with a hoss ahead on 'em; but a woman, Mr. Benedict"—and Jim's voice sunk to a solemn and impressive key—"a woman with the right kind of an eye, an' a takin' way, is stronger nor a steam Injun. She can snake ye 'round anywhere; an' the queerest thing about it is that a feller's willin' to go, an' thinks it's purty. She tells ye to come, an' ye come smilin'; and then she tells ye to go, an' ye go smilin'; and then she winds ye 'round her finger, and ye feel as limber an' as willin' as if ye was a whip-lash, an' hadn't nothin' else to do."

"Nevertheless, I shall stay with you, Jim."

"Well, I hope ye will; but don't ye be too sartin; not that I'm goin' to stan' atween ye an' good luck, but

if ye calc'late that a woman's goin' to let ye do jest as ye think ye will—leastways a woman as has five hundred dollars in yer pocket—yer eddication hasn't been well took care on. If I was sitooated like you, I'd jest walk up to the pastur'-bars like a hoss, an' whinner to git in, an' expect to be called with a corn-cob when she got ready to use me."

"Still, I shall stay with you, Jim."

"All right; here's hopin', an' here's my hand."

Benedict's letter, besides the check, held still another inclosure—a note from Mr. Balfour. This he had slipped into his pocket, and, in the absorption of his attention produced by the principal communication, forgotten. At the close of his conversation with Jim, he remembered it, and took it out and read it. It conveyed the intelligence that the lawyer found it impossible to leave the city according to his promise, for an autumn vacation in the woods. Still, he would find some means to send up Harry if Mr. Benedict should insist upon it. The boy was well, and progressing satisfactorily in his studies. He was happy, and found a new reason for happiness in his intimacy with Mrs. Dillingham, with whom he was spending a good deal of his leisure time. If Mr. Benedict would consent to a change of plans, it was his wish to keep the lad through the winter, and then, with all his family, to go up to Number Nine in the spring, be present at Jim's wedding, and assist in the inauguration of the new hotel.

Mr. Benedict was more easily reconciled to this change of plan than he would have believed possible an hour previously. The letter, whose contents had so mystified and disturbed Jim, had changed the whole aspect of his life. He replied to this letter during the day, and wrote another to Mr. Balfour, consenting to his wishes, and acquiescing in his plans. For the first time in many years, he could see through all his trials, into the calm

daylight. Harry was safe and happy in a new association with a woman who, more than any other, held his life in her hands. He was getting a new basis for life in friendship and love. Shored up by affection and sympathy, and with a modest competence in his hands for all present and immediately prospective needs, his dependent nature could once more stand erect.

Henceforward he dropped his idle dreaming and became interested in his work, and doubly efficient in its execution. Jim once more had in possession the old friend whose cheerfulness and good-nature had originally won his affection; and the late autumn and winter which lay before them seemed full of hopeful and happy enterprise.

Miss Butterworth, hearing occasionally through Jim of the progress of affairs at Number Nine, began to think it about time to make known her secret among her friends. Already they had begun to suspect that the little tailoress had a secret, out of which would grow a change in her life. She had made some astonishing purchases at the village shops, which had been faithfully reported. She was working early and late in her little room. She was, in the new prosperity of the villagers, collecting her trifling dues. She had given notice of the recall of her modest loans. There were many indications that she was preparing to leave the town.

"Now, really," said Mrs. Snow to her one evening, when Miss Butterworth was illuminating the parsonage by her presence—"now, really, you must tell us all about it. I'm dying to know."

"Oh, it's too ridiculous for anything," said Miss Butterworth, laughing herself almost into hysterics.

"Now, what, Keziah? What's too ridiculous? You *are* the most provoking person!"

"The idea of my getting married!"

Mrs. Snow jumped up and seized Miss Butterworth's hands, and said:

"Why, Keziah Butterworth! You don't tell me! You wicked, deceitful creature!"

The three Misses Snow all jumped up with their mother, and pressed around the merry object of their earnest congratulations.

"So unexpected and strange, you know," said the eldest.

"So very unexpected!" said the second.

"And so very strange, too!" echoed Number Three.

"Well, it *is* too ridiculous for anything," Miss Butterworth repeated. "The idea of my living to be an old maid, and, what's more, making up my mind to it, and then"—and then Miss Butterworth plunged into a new fit of merriment.

"Well, Keziah, I hope you'll be very happy. Indeed I do," said Mrs. Snow, becoming motherly.

"Happy all your life," said Miss Snow.

"Very happy," said Number Two.

"All your life long," rounded up the complement of good wishes from the lips of the youngest of the trio.

"Well, I'm very much obliged to you—to you all"—said Miss Butterworth, wiping her eyes; "but it certainly is the most ridiculous thing. I say to myself sometimes: 'Keziah Butterworth! You little old fool! What *are* you going to do with that man? How *are* you going to live with him?' Goodness knows that I've racked my brain over it until I'm just about crazy. Don't mention it, but I believe I'll use him for a watchdog—tie him up daytimes, and let him out nights, you know!"

"Why, isn't he nice?" inquired Mrs. Snow.

"Nice! He's as rough as a hemlock tree."

"What do you marry him for?" inquired Mrs. Snow in astonishment.

"I'm sure I don't know. I've asked myself the question a thousand times."

"Don't you want to marry him?"

"I don't know. I guess I do."

"My dear," said Mrs. Snow, soberly, "this is a very solemn thing."

"I don't see it in that light," said Miss Butterworth, indulging in a new fit of laughter. "I wish I could, but it's the funniest thing. I wake up laughing over it, and I go to sleep laughing over it, and I say to myself, 'What are you laughing at, you ridiculous creature?'"

"Well, I believe you are a ridiculous creature," said Mrs. Snow.

"I know I am, and if anybody had told me a year ago that I should ever marry Jim Fenton, I——"

"Jim Fenton!" exclaimed the whole Snow family.

"Well, what is there so strange about my marrying Jim Fenton?" and the little tailoress straightened in her chair, her eyes flashing, and the color mounting to her face.

"Oh, nothing; but you know—it's such a surprise—he's so—he's so—well he's a—not cultivated—never has seen much society, you know; and lives almost out of the world, as it were."

"Oh, no! He isn't cultivated! He ought to have been brought up in Sevenoaks and polished! He ought to have been subjected to the civilizing and refining influences of Bob Belcher!"

"Now, you mustn't be offended, Keziah. We are all your friends, and anxious for your welfare."

"But you think Jim Fenton is a brute."

"I have said nothing of the kind."

"But you think so."

"I think you ought to know him better than I do."

"Well, I do, and he is just the loveliest, manliest, noblest, splendidest old fellow that ever lived. I don't care if he does live out of the world. I'd go with him, and live with him, if he used the North Pole for a back

log. Fah! I hate a slick man. Jim has spoiled me for anything but a true man in the rough. There's more pluck in his old shoes than you can find in all the men of Sevenoaks put together. And he's as tender—Oh, Mrs. Snow! Oh, girls! He's as tender as a baby—just as tender as a baby! He has said to me the most wonderful things! I wish I could remember them. I never can, and I couldn't say them as he does if I could. Since I became acquainted with him, it seems as if the world had been made all over new. I'd become kind o' tired of human nature, you know. It seemed sometimes as if it was just as well to be a cow as a woman; but I've become so much to him, and he has become so much to me, that all the men and women around me have grown beautiful. And he loves me in a way that is so strong—and so protecting—and so sweet and careful—that—now don't you laugh, or you'll make me angry—I'd feel safer in his arms than I would in a church!"

"Well, I'm sure!" exclaimed Mrs. Snow.

"Isn't it remarkable!" said Miss Snow.

"Quite delightful!" exclaimed the second sister, whose enthusiasm could not be crammed into Miss Snow's expression.

"Really charming," added Number Three.

"You are quite sure you don't know what you want to marry him for?" said Mrs. Snow, with a roguish twinkle in her eye. "You are quite sure you don't love him?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Miss Butterworth. "It's something. I wish you could hear him talk. His grammar would kill you. It would just kill you. You'd never breathe after it. Such awful nominative cases as that man has! And you can't beat him out of them. And such a pronunciation! His words are just as rough as he is, and just like him. They seem to have a great deal more meaning in them than they do when

they have good clothes on. You don't know how I enjoy hearing him talk."

"I'm inclined to think you love him," said Mrs. Snow, smiling.

"I don't know. Isn't it the most ridiculous thing now?"

"No; it isn't ridiculous at all," said Mrs. Snow, soberly.

Miss Butterworth's moon was sailing high that evening. There were but few clouds in her heaven, but occasionally a tender vapor passed across the silver disc, and one passed at this moment. Her eyes were loaded with tears as she looked up in Mrs. Snow's face, and said:

"I was very lonely, you know. Life had become very tame, and I saw nothing before me different from my daily experience, which had grown to be wearisome. Jim came and opened a new life to me, offered me companionship, new circumstances, new surroundings. It was like being born again. And, do you know, I don't think it is natural for a woman to carry her own life. I got very tired of mine, and when this strong man came, and was willing to take it up, and bear it for me as the greatest pleasure I could bestow upon him, what could I do—now, what could I do? I don't think I'm proud of him, but I belong to him, and I'm glad; and that's all there is about it;" and Miss Butterworth sprang to her feet as if she were about to leave the house.

"You are not going," said Mrs. Snow, catching her by both shoulders, "so sit down."

"I've told you the whole: there's nothing more. I suppose it will be a great wonder to the Sevenoaks people, and that they'll think I'm throwing myself away, but I do hope they will let me alone."

"When are you to be married?"

"In the spring."

"Where?"

"Oh! anywhere. No matter where. I haven't thought about that part of it."

"Then you'll be married right here, in this house. You shall have a nice little wedding."

"Oh! and orange-blossoms!" exclaimed Miss Snow, clapping her hands.

"And a veil!" added Number Two.

"And a ——" Number Three was not so familiar with such occasions as to be able to supply another article, so she clapped her hands.

They were all in a delicious flutter. It would be so nice to have a wedding in the house! It was a good sign. Did the young ladies think that it might break a sort of electric spell that hung over the parsonage, and result in a shower which would float them all off? Perhaps so. They were, at least, very happy about it.

Then they all sat down again, to talk over the matter of clothes. Miss Butterworth did not wish to make herself ridiculous.

"I've said a thousand times, if I ever said it once," she remarked, "that there's no fool like an old fool. Now, I don't want to hear any nonsense about orange-blossoms, or about a veil. If there's anything that I do despise above board, it's a bridal veil on an old maid. And I'm not going to have a lot of things made up that I can't use. I'm just going to have a snug, serviceable set of clothes, and in three days I'm going to look as if I'd been married ten years."

"It seems to me," said Miss Snow, "that you ought to do something. I'm sure, if I were in your place, that I should want to do something."

The other girls tittered.

"Not that I ever expect to be in your place, or anything like it," she went on, "but it does seem to me as

if something extra ought to be done—white kid gloves or something.”

“And white satin gaiters,” suggested the youngest sister.

“I guess you’d think Jim Fenton was extra enough if you knew him,” said Miss Butterworth, laughing. “There’s plenty that’s extra, goodness knows! without buying anything.”

“Well,” persisted the youngest Miss Snow, “I’d have open-worked stockings, and have my hair frizzed, any way.”

“Oh, I speak to do your hair,” put in the second daughter.

“You’re just a lot of chickens, the whole of you,” said the tailoress.

Miss Snow, whose age was hovering about the confines of mature maidenhood, smiled a deprecating smile, and said that she thought she was about what they sold for chickens sometimes, and intimated that she was anything but tender.

“Well, don’t be discouraged; that’s all I have to say,” remarked Miss Butterworth. “If I can get married, anybody can. If anybody had told me that—well isn’t it too ridiculous for anything? Now, isn’t it?” And the little tailoress went off into another fit of laughter. Then she jumped up and said she really must go.

The report that Jim Fenton was soon to lead to the hymeneal altar the popular village tailoress, spread with great rapidity, and as it started from the minister’s family, it had a good send-off, and was accompanied by information that very pleasantly modified its effect upon the public mind. The men of the village who knew Jim a great deal better than the women, and who, in various ways, had become familiar with his plans for a hotel, and recognized the fact that his enterprise would make Sevenoaks a kind of thoroughfare for his prospective

city-boarders, decided that she had “done well.” Jim was enterprising, and, as they termed it, “forehanded.” His habits were good, his industry indefatigable, his common sense and good nature unexampled. Everybody liked Jim. To be sure, he was rough and uneducated, but he was honorable and true. He would make a good “provider.” Miss Butterworth might have gone further and fared worse. On the whole, it was a good thing; and they were glad for Jim’s sake and for Miss Butterworth’s that it had happened.

The women took their cue from the men. They thought, however, that Miss Butterworth would be very lonesome, and found various pegs on which to hang out their pity for a public airing. Still, the little tailoress was surprised at the heartiness of their congratulations, and often melted to tears by the presents she received from the great number of families for whom, every year, she had worked. No engagement had occurred in Sevenoaks for a long time that created so much interest, and enlisted so many sympathies. They hoped she would be very happy. They would be exceedingly sorry to lose her. Nobody could ever take her place. She had always been one whom they could have in their families “without making any difference,” and she never tattled.

So Miss Butterworth found herself quite a heroine, but whenever Jim showed himself, the women all looked out of the windows, and made their own comments. After all, they couldn’t see exactly what Miss Butterworth could find to like in him. They saw a tall, strong, rough, good-natured-looking man, whom all the men and all the boys greeted with genuine heartiness. They saw him pushing about his business with the air of one who owned the whole village; but his clothes were rough, and his boots over his trowsers. They hoped it would all turn out well. There was “no doubt that he needed a woman badly enough.”

Not only Miss Butterworth but Jim became the subject of congratulation. The first time he entered Sevenoaks after the announcement of his engagement, he was hailed from every shop, and button-holed at every corner. The good-natured chaffing to which he was subjected he met with his old smile.

"Much obleeged to ye for leavin' her for a man as knows a genuine creetur when he sees her," he said, to one and another, who rallied him upon his matrimonial intentions.

"Isn't she rather old?" inquired one whose manners were not learned of Lord Chesterfield.

"I dunno," he replied; "she's hearn it thunder enough not to be skeered, an' she's had the measles an' the whoopin' cough, an' the chicken-pox, an' the mumps, an' got through with her nonsense."

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH JIM GETS THE FURNITURE INTO HIS HOUSE, AND MIKE CONLIN GETS ANOTHER INSTALMENT OF ADVICE INTO JIM.

JIM had a weary winter. He was obliged to hire and to board a number of workmen, whom it was necessary to bring in from Sevenoaks, to effect the finishing of his house. His money ran low at last, and Mr. Benedict was called upon to write a letter to Mr. Balfour on his behalf, accepting that gentleman's offer of pecuniary assistance. This was a humiliating trial to Jim, for he had hoped to enter upon his new life free from the burden of debt; but Mr. Balfour assured him that he did not regard his contribution to the building-fund as a loan—it was only the payment for his board in advance.

Jim was astonished to learn the extent of Miss Butterworth's resources. She proposed to furnish the house from the savings of her years of active industry. She had studied it so thoroughly during its progress, though she had never seen it, that she could have found every door and gone through every apartment of it in the dark. She had received from Mr. Benedict the plan and dimensions of every room. Carpets were made, matting was purchased, sets of furniture were procured, crockery, glass, linen, mirrors, curtains, kitchen utensils, everything necessary to house-keeping, were bought and placed in store, so that, when the spring came, all that remained necessary was to give her order to forward them, and write her directions for their bestowal in the house.

The long-looked for time came at last. The freshets of spring had passed away; the woods were filling with birds; the shad-blossoms were reaching their flat sprays out over the river, and looking at themselves in the sunny waters; and the thrush, standing on the deck of the New Year, had piped all hands from below, and sent them into the rigging to spread the sails.

Jim's heart was glad. His house was finished, and nothing remained but to fill it with the means and appliances of life, and with that precious life to which they were to be devoted. The enterprise by which it was to be supported lay before him, and was a burden upon him; but he believed in himself, and was not afraid.

One morning, after he had gone over his house for the thousandth time, and mounted to the cupola for a final survey, he started for Sevenoaks to make his arrangements for the transportation of the furniture. Two new boats had been placed on the river by men who proposed to act as guides to the summer visitors, and these he engaged to aid in the water transportation of the articles that had been provided by "the little woman."

After his arrival in Sevenoaks, he was in consultation with her every day; and every day he was more impressed by the method which she had pursued in the work of furnishing his little hotel.

"I knowed you was smarter nor lightnin'," he said to her; "but I didn't know you was smarter nor a man."

In his journeys, Jim was necessarily thrown into the company of Mike Conlin, who was officiously desirous to place at his disposal the wisdom which had been acquired by long years of intimate association with the feminine element of domestic life, and the duties and practices of house-keeping. When the last load of furniture was on its way to Number Nine, and Jim had stopped at Mike's house to refresh his weary team, Mike saw that his last opportunity for giving advice had come, and he determined to avail himself of it.

"Jim," he said, "ye're jist nothing but a babby, an' ye must ax me some questions. I'm an owld house-kaper, an' I kin tell ye everything, Jim."

Jim was tired with his work, and tired of Mike. The great event of his life stood so closely before him, and he was so much absorbed by it, that Mike's talk had a harsher effect upon his sensibilities than the grating of a saw-mill.

"Ah! Mike! shut up, shut up!" he said. "Ye mean well, but ye're the ignorantest ramus I ever seen. Ye know how to run a shanty an' a pig-pen, but what do ye know about keepin' a hotel?"

"Bedad, if that's where ye are, what do ye know about kaping a hotel yersilf? Ye'll see the time, Jim, when ye'll be sorry ye turned the cold shoolder to the honest tongue of Mike Conlin."

"Well, Mike, ye understand a pig-pen better nor I do. I gi'en it up," said Jim, with a sigh that showed how painfully Mike was boring him.

"Yes, Jim, an' ye think a pig-pen is benathe ye, for-

gittin' a pig is the purtiest thing in life. Ah, Jim! whin ye git up in the marnin', a falin' shtewed, an' niver a bit o' breakfast in ye, an' go out in the djew barefut, as ye was borrn, lavin' yer coat kapin' company wid yer ugly owld hat, waitin' for yer pork and pertaties, an' see yer pig wid his two paws an' his dirty nose rachin' oover the pin, an' sayin' 'good-marnin' to ye,' an' squalin' away wid his big v'ice for his porridge, ye'll remimber what I say. An' Jim, whin ye fade 'im, ah! whin ye fade 'im! an' he jist lays down continted, wid his belly full, an' ye laugh to hear 'im a groontin' an' a shwearin' to 'imself to think he can't ate innny more, an' yer owld woman calls ye to breakfast, ye'll go in jist happy—jist happy, now. Ah, ye can't tell me! I'm an' owld house-kaper, Jim."

"Ye're an old pig-keeper; that's what you be," said Jim. "Ye're a reg'lar Paddy, Mike. Ye're a good fellow, but I'd sooner hearn a loon nor a pig."

"Divil a bit o' raison have ye got in ye, Jim. Ye can't ate a loon no more nor ye can ate a boot."

Mike was getting impatient with the incorrigible character of Jim's prejudices, and Jim saw that he was grieving him.

"Well, I persume I sh'll have to keep pigs, Mike," he said, in a compromising tone; "but I shan't dress 'em in calliker, nor larn 'em to sing Old Hundred. I sh'll jist let 'em rampage round the woods, and when I want one on 'em, I'll shoot 'im."

"Yis, bedad, an' thin ye'll shkin 'im, an' throw the rist of 'im intil the river," responded Mike, contemptuously.

"No, Mike; I'll send for ye to cut 'im up an' pack 'im."

"Now ye talk," said Mike; and this little overture of friendly confidence became a door through which he could enter a subject more profoundly interesting to him than that which related to his favorite quadruped.

"What kind of an owld woman have ye got, Jim? Jist open yer heart like a box o' tobacky, Jim, an' lit me hilp ye. There's no man as knows more about a woman nor Mike Conlin. Ah, Jim! ye ought to 'ave seed me wid the girrls in the owld counthry! They jist rin afther me as if I'd been stalin' their little hearrts. There was a twilvemonth whin they tore the very coat tails aff me back. Be gorry I could 'ave married me whole neighborhood, an' I jist had to marry the first one I could lay me honest hands on, an' take mesilf away wid her to Ameriky."

This was too much for Jim. His face broadened into his old smile.

"Mike," said he, "ye haven't got an old towel or a hoss blanket about ye, have ye? I feel as if I was a goin' to cry?"

"An' what the divil be ye goin' to cry for?"

"Well, Mike, this is a world o' sorrer, an' when a feller comes to think of a lot o' women as is so hard pushed that they hanker arter Mike Conlin, it fetches me. It's worse nor bein' without victuals, an' beats the cholery out o' sight."

"Oh, ye blaggard! Can't ye talk sinse whin yer betthers is thryin' to hilp ye? What kind of an owld woman have ye got, now?"

"Mike," said Jim, solemnly, "ye don't know what ye're talkin' about. If ye did, ye wouldn't call her an old woman. She's a lady, Mike. She isn't one o' your kind, an' I ain't one o' your kind, Mike. Can't ye see there's the difference of a pig atween us? Don't ye know that if I was to go hazin' round in the mornin' without no clo'es to speak on, an' takin' comfort in a howlin' pig, that I shouldn't be up to keepin' a hotel? Don't be unreasonable; and, Mike, don't ye never speak to me about my old woman. That's a sort o' thing that won't set on her."

Mike shook his head in lofty pity.

"Ah, Jim, I can see what ye're comin' to."

Then, as if afraid that his "owld woman" might overhear his confession, he bent toward Jim, and half whispered:

"The women is all smarter nor the men, Jim; but ye mustn't let 'em know that ye think it. Ye've got to call 'em yer owld women, or ye can't keep 'em where ye want 'em. Be gorry! I wouldn't let me owld woman know what I think of 'er fur fifty dollars. I couldn't kape me house over me head inny time at all at all, if I should whishper it. She's jist as much of a leddy as there is in Sevenoaks, bedad, an' I have to put on me big airs, an' thrash around wid me two hands in me breeches pockets, an' shtick out me lips like a lorr, an' promise to raise the divil wid her whinver she gets a fit o' high flyin', an' ye'll have to do the same, Jim, or jist lay down an' let 'er shtep on ye. Git a good shtart, Jim. Don't ye gin 'er the bit for five minutes. She'll rin away wid ye. Ye can't till me anything about women."

"No, nor I don't want to. Now you jest shut up, Mike. I'm tired a hearin' ye. This thing about women is one as has half the fun of it in larnin' it as ye go along. Ye mean well enough, Mike, but yer eddication is poor; an' if it's all the same to ye, I'll take my pudden straight an' leave yer sarce for them as likes it."

Jim's utter rejection of the further good offices of Mike, in the endeavor to instruct him in the management of his future relations with the little woman, did not sink very deep into the Irishman's sensibilities. Indeed, it could not have done so, for their waters were shallow, and, as at this moment Mike's "owld woman" called both to dinner, the difference was forgotten in the sympathy of hunger and the satisfactions of the table.

Jim felt that he was undergoing a change—had undergone one, in fact. It had never revealed itself to him so fully as it did during his conversation with Mike. The building of the hotel, the study of the wants of another grade of civilization than that to which he had been accustomed, the frequent conversations with Miss Butterworth, the responsibilities he had assumed, all had tended to lift him; and he felt that Mike Conlin was no longer a tolerable companion. The shallowness of the Irishman's mind and life disgusted him, and he knew that the time would soon come when, by a process as natural as the falling of the leaves in autumn, he should drop a whole class of associations, and stand where he could look down upon them—where they would look up to him. The position of principal, the command of men, the conduct of, and the personal responsibility for, a great enterprise, had given him conscious growth. His old life and his old associations were insufficient to contain him.

After dinner they started on, for the first time accompanied by Mike's wife. Before her marriage she had lived the life common to her class—that of cook and housemaid in the families of gentlemen. She knew the duties connected with the opening of a house, and could bring its machinery into working order. She could do a thousand things that a man either could not do, or would not think of doing; and Jim had arranged that she should be house-keeper until the mistress of the establishment should be installed in her office.

The sun had set before they arrived at the river, and the boats of the two guides, with Jim's, which had been brought down by Mr. Benedict, were speedily loaded with the furniture, and Mike, picketing his horses for the night, embarked with the rest, and all slept at Number Nine.

In three days Jim was to be married, and his cage was

ready for his bird. The stoop with its "settle," the ladder for posies, at the foot of which the morning-glories were already planted, and the "cupalo," had ceased to be dreams, and become realities. Still, it all seemed a dream to Jim. He waked in the morning in his own room, and wondered whether he were not dreaming. He went out upon his piazza, and saw the cabin in which he had spent so many nights in his old simple life, then went off and looked up at his house or ranged through the rooms, and experienced the emotion of regret so common to those in similar circumstances, that he could never again be what he had been, or be contented with what he had been—that he had crossed a point in his life which his retiring feet could never repass. It was the natural reaction of the long strain of expectation which he had experienced, and would pass away; but while it was upon him he mourned over the death of his old self, and the hopeless obliteration of his old circumstances.

Mr. Balfour had been written to, and would keep his promise to be present at the wedding, with Mrs. Balfour and the boys. Sam Yates, at Jim's request, had agreed to see to the preparation of an appropriate outfit for the bridegroom. Such invitations had been given out as Miss Butterworth dictated, and the Snow family was in a flutter of expectation. Presents of a humble and useful kind had been pouring in upon Miss Butterworth for days, until, indeed, she was quite overwhelmed. It seemed as if the whole village were in a conspiracy of beneficence.

In a final conference with Mrs. Snow, Miss Butterworth said:

"I don't know at all how he is going to behave, and I'm not going to trouble myself about it; he shall do just as he pleases. He has made his way with me, and if he is good enough for me, he is good enough for other